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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

VOLUME 5 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER, 1923 NUMBER 11

NOVEMBER MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 8th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, corner of McAllister and Larkin Streets. Take elevator to third floor. Car lines No. 5 or No. 19.

Mr. Joseph R. Slevin, Asst. Curator of Herpetology, California Academy of Sciences, will deliver an address on the subject of the Giant Tortoises of the Galapagos Islands, with references to the bird life of the islands and also of Lower California. Visitors will be welcomed.

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NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, November 11th, to Lake Lagunitas. Purchase round trip tickets to Ross and take Sausalito ferry leaving San Francisco at 8:45 a. m. In event of rain preventing the trip, it will be taken the following Sunday. Bring lunch and canteens or cups.

This is a walk of about eight miles, up the canyon, around the lake, and back to Ross. Lunch will be eaten at picnic place below Lake Lagunitas.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE OCTOBER MEETING: The eighty-first regular meeting of the Association was held on October 11th, in the Assembly Hall of the San Francisco Public Library, with President Kibbe in the chair; Mrs. Carl R. Smith, Secretary; fourteen members and three guests in attendance.

The feature of the meeting consisted of an address by Mr. J. R. Pemberton on the "Birds of Patagonia," based upon observations covering a period of five years, during which he traversed every portion of this interesting territory from the Rio Negro to the Straits of Magellan, while engaged in classifying the land for the Argentine Government.

This region corresponds in latitude to the area between Hudson's Bay and Memphis, Tennessee, extending about twelve hundred miles from north to south and varying from two to four hundred miles in width. The Andean range runs along the western side, close to the Pacific, with peaks 15,000 to 18,000 feet high in the northerly portion, gradually descending and finally plunging into the ocean in the south. Many of these peaks are active volcanoes. Between the Andes and the Atlantic lies a sloping plain country dropping at the rate of about three feet per mile. The high Andean range blankets the country in the north from the prevailing westerly winds to such an extent that the annual rainfall is as low as five inches per annum. This increases toward the south as the mountains become lower, and the arid lands increase in productivity with the precipitation which reaches three hundred inches per annum in the south. The winds are very strong and nothing grows in the plain country above knee height, while men and horses

have to lie down during the high gales which may hold for a week at a time. There are something like thirty six glaciers entering the ocean, with faces extending perhaps three or four miles and three or four hundred feet in height. The plain country is traversed by a number of great rivers running eastward from the mountains to the Atlantic. The higher foothill zone along the mountain range is forested with beeches and conifers and this will ultimately be opened up to commerce by the construction of railroads connecting it with the Atlantic coast.

Patagonia contains members of every order of bird found in the United States, except the *Gallinae*, and there are three families there which are not represented here, the Rheas, Tinamous and Penguins. Grebes are plentiful and many Gulls and Terns are found along the coast, especially in the south. There are full assortments of Fulmars, Petrels and Puffins. Cormorants, ducks, geese and swans abound. Notable is the steamer duck, of the size of a small goose, which loses the power of flying but is a rapid swimmer. The Cinnamon Teal is at home here. The Penguins are characteristic birds of the southern coasts, and lay two eggs in nests slightly hollowed out of the ground.

Of raptorial birds there are the eagle, the condor in the Andes, turkey vulture, three carrion hawks and the short-eared owl. One of the hawks, called a *chimango*, brown in color and of the size of a marsh hawk, nests in colonies in the tule marshes, as many as a thousand pairs together, with myriads of rosy-breasted, black-headed gulls. Great blue herons, almost identical with ours; two species of coot, one like ours and another; the glossy ibis; golden plover in the extreme north; a rail like the Virginia; a dozen familiar sandpipers, of which some are seen all through the year; great kingfishers, flycatchers, blackbirds, finches, vireos and thrushes. There are few woodpeckers, except in the Andes; one with a ladder-back, like our Nuttall, and a black one. Two or three species of hummer, flamingoes, one large and one small parrot occur as far south as Lago Buenos Aires, in Latitude 47°, situated in one of the gaps in the mountain range. Here, with a foot of snow on the ground and icebergs in the lake, some two thousand flamingoes were found nesting; parrots in the forests and hummers in the wild fuchsia around the lake, all breeding.

The Rio Negro separates two species of Rhea, the Darwin on the south from the American on the north. Some individuals cross the river, but they do not remain there and the two species do not mingle. This bird is the American ostrich, with three toes, and a most interesting one it is. Its feathers are much in use for feather dusters. The males each have a herd of females and construct the nests for them. The females are conducted to the nests serially, and each lays three eggs there, some nests containing as many as sixty eggs in three layers. The male then chases them and raises the family himself, hatching perhaps twelve or fifteen young. These birds are readily tamed and a covey of sixteen lived in the camp. They could never overcome their fear of a surveyor's flag. The eagle is their only enemy and it was thought that they mistook the flag for one. If a peon waved a flag, the rheas would promptly cluster about the nearest man for protection, or otherwise would run a half-mile to camp to get away from their bugaboo. The Tinamou is a curious bird, resembling a guinea fowl but related to the Rhea. It has no control over its flight and is out of luck as soon as it leaves terra firma. Its eggs are of a beautiful, brilliant green color and its flesh is very good eating.

Then there is a meadow lark, *Petro Colorado*, reddish instead of yellow, and darker in tone. Also other birds which look like Canadian nuthatches; others like pipits and horned larks; others like creepers; another like a Louisiana water thrush; another in the Andes like a winter wren; another resembles a cactus wren, and, running in the forests, a rail-like bird with

long legs and a short, fat, bill. In northern Argentina, the *hornero*, or ovenbird. These are all peculiar to South and Central America.

In many instances the character of nest is modified from the type familiar to us, to conform with the exigencies of the territory. Flycatchers nest on the ground to escape damage by the high winds while for the same reason numbers of birds make their nests in holes and all of these lay white eggs. The seasons being reversed, the limits of the Patagonian nesting season are September 26th and February 3d.

It is regrettable that space precludes our offering more than the foregoing summary of one of the most interesting lectures ever enjoyed by the Association and those present expressed their appreciation in glowing terms.

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OCTOBER FIELD TRIP was taken on Sunday, the 14th, to Lake Merced, with fine weather and a large party. The usual route was followed, half-way around the first lake, then skirting the westerly and southerly shores of the large lake and out along the big wooden flume through the truck farms to the car line at Daly City.

The features of the day were furnished by fine views of a bittern, a female marsh hawk and a Virginia rail, followed by the flushing of two burrowing owls from their holes in one of the truck patches.

Members in attendance were: Mesdemoiselles Ayer, Olive Burroughs, Gunn and Nienburg; Mesdames Kibbe and Parry; Messrs. Kibbe, Thomas and Ananda Jacobs. As guests, Mesdemoiselles Newton, Thompson and Tuttle; Mrs. Gunn, son and daughter and Mrs M. U. Hall; Messrs. Myer, Parry and Felix Jacobs. Nine members and ten guests.

Birds encountered were: Eared and pied-billed grebes; common loon, on lake and wing; western, California and Heermann gulls, cormorant and ruddy duck; bittern, great blue heron, black-crowned night heron, Virginia rail and coot; killdeer, marsh hawk, sharp-shinned and sparrow hawks and burrowing owl; kingfisher, red-shafted flicker, Allen hummer, black phoebe and California horned lark; tri-colored and bi-colored redwings and meadowlark; willow goldfinch, pine siskin, Nuttall sparrow, junco and song sparrow; San Francisco towhee, Townsend and Audubon warblers and salt marsh yellow throat; winter and tule wrens, chickadee and bush-tit. Thirty-nine species.

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BIRDS IN ARGENTINE INDIAN FOLK LORE

II. Crespín.

The Crespín, *Tapera naevia chochi*, is a slim, graceful cuckoo; its coloration, a bronzed gray with blackish spots on the shafts of the feathers. The breast is grayish, the throat and belly white and it has a white superciliary eye stripe.

The bird has a monotonous cry which it repeats interminably. Its ventriloquism is the most notable thing about it, and people are usually at loss as to its location. For hours, from afar off, is heard its characteristic plaint, but if an effort is made to follow the sound it appears to come now from the right, now from the left, now to be afar off, now close by. This apparently mysterious quality, together with its mournful call, has perhaps furnished the motive for the many fables that surround the name of the Crespín.

In La Loca, a narrow, rocky, defile, was a small ranch where lived an old woman, a very old woman. She had two grandchildren, twins, a boy and a girl, Crespín and Crespína, who were greatly devoted to their grandmother and to each other. One morning Crespína had a great desire to eat alpa-

misque. She had heard that in the very remotest valleys, there where only the savage Indian Chanchos live, that alpamisques could be obtained with sweeter, thicker juice and with superior flavor. But these valleys were remote, deep, dark and dangerous, and so she feared to say anything about her desire, but her grandmother fell ill, and in her delirium also begged for alpamisque.

Crespína was torn between her love for her grandmother and fear of what might happen to her brother. Suppose Crespín never returned! Suppose the Chanchos killed him! But on the other hand her grandmother might recover with the wonderful juice! Thinking of all this she decided to consult her brother and told him her fears and desires.

Crespín embraced his sister, kissed her, asked the blessing of his ancient grandmother, and started for the source of the Cañon. Crespína with her eyes full of tears saw him disappear into the depths of the woods.

This happened very early in the morning. At noon the grandmother was so much worse that she no longer knew her little granddaughter. In the evening she breathed her last and Crespína was alone! She knelt by her grandmother's bed and prayed until at last worn out, she fell asleep.

In the early morn she started from her sleep calling, "Crespín, Crespín" and then she remembered what had happened. Without taking even a crumb of bread she went out the door straight down the path where Crespín had disappeared from her sight. She followed the faint trail all day, and night surprised her in a forest. "Oh," she thought, "if I were a bird I would fly swiftly in search of my brother." And tearing her hands and feet she climbed a thorny churqui tree to sleep. While she slept her lips repeated "Crespín, Crespín!"

Two days Crespína followed her quest. Each night she climbed a tree and from the topmost branches she cried the beloved name again and again. By this time her voice had become so weak that it was more a sob than a call.

When the sun next warmed up the leaves of the trees she again climbed to the highest most flexible branches of a great tree, stretched out her arms and imitated the motions of a bird—and she flew! She flew without resting over the deep, dark forest. She had become a bird! As she flew she tried to call her brother who might be hidden by the great trees, but from her mouth that had become a beak there came no sound but a sob. At dusk she searched for a branch amid the thickest foliage of a giant tree, and from her bill came the call, like an eternal lament, "Crespín! Crespín!"

From that day, when the dusk gathers, thick and gloomy, from the deepest source of the cañons come the notes that are more a lament than a song, filled with eternal yearning, and repeated incessantly, "Crespín! Crespín!"

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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Meets second Thursday of each month, at 8:00 p.m., in Assembly Hall of San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets.

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